

REMARKS

This is a full and timely response to the outstanding FINAL Office Action mailed August 25, 2006. The Examiner is thanked for the thorough examination of the present application and the indication that claims 8, 9, 18, 19, 31-33, 44 and 45 define allowable subject matter. (Office Action, pg. 7) In reliance of this admission and in light of the fact that multiple FINAL Office Actions have been issued for the present invention, Applicants have made the following amendments. Independent claim 1 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 8, and claim 8 is correspondingly canceled. (Claim 9 is amended to revise its dependency to depend from claim 1.) Independent claim 20 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 33, and claim 33 is correspondingly canceled. Finally, independent claim 36 is amended to include the allowable subject matter of claim 45, and claim 45 is correspondingly canceled.

After entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1, 3-7, 10-17, 20, 22-30, 34-36, 38-43, and 46-48 are pending. (While the FINAL Office Action states on page 2 that claims 1, 3-18, 20, 22-31, 34-36, 38-43, and 46-49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), Applicants assume that the Office Action intended to state that claims 1, 3-7, 10-17, 20, 22-30, 34-36, 38-43, and 46-48 are rejected, as reflected in the "Office Action Summary" section. Furthermore, the Office Action indicates on page 7 that claims 8, 9, 18, 19, 31-33, 44 and 45 define allowable subject matter. Finally, Applicants note that claim 49, while designated as pending in the Summary section of the Office Action, is not even addressed within the detailed portion of the Office Action.) Specifically, claims 1, 3-7, 10-17, 20, 22-30, 34-36, 38-43, and 46-48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over *Preuss* (U.S. Pat. No. 6,590,889) in view of

Langlais (U.S. Pat. No. 6,091,932). While Applicants maintain their stance regarding this rejection and disagree with the Office Action, the rejection has been rendered moot by the amendments made herein.

Claims 1, 20, and 36 are the independent claims, and each of these claims now recites subject matter that the Office Action admitted to be allowable. For at least the following reasons, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Applicants again note with appreciation that the Examiner has indicated that claims 8, 9, 18, 19, 31-33, 44 and 45 *"would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims."* (Office Action, pg. 7) In response to this admission, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 20, and 36 to incorporate the allowable subject matter therein. Claims 8, 33, and 45 become redundant and are thus canceled. In light of these amendments, Applicants' independent claims 1, 20, and 36 are now in condition for allowance. In addition, claims 3-18, 22-31, 34-35, 38-43, and 46-49 are also in condition for allowance since their respective independent claims 1, 20, and 36 are allowable. *See, e.g., In re Fine*, 837 F. 2d 1071 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

Applicants respectfully request consideration of the following remarks contained herein. Reconsideration and allowance of the application and presently pending claims are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application and all pending claims are hereby courteously requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (770) 933-9500.

No fee is believed to be due in connection with this amendment and response to Office Action. If, however, any fee is believed to be due, you are hereby authorized to charge any such fee to deposit account No. 20-0778.

Respectfully submitted,

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